



Office of the Mayor

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July 3, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
West Building
Office of the Secretary – Ninth Floor
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I write today to ask for your support of the City of Madison's "Putting People First: Improving Vulnerable Roadway Users Safety through Proactive and Predictive Smart City Technologies" application to the FY 2024 Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) program. Advances in technology have significantly improved transportation safety. Motor vehicle improvements such as the addition of air bags, backup cameras, emergency braking, and blind spot warning have changed traffic crash outcomes for the better. We believe that technology has the potential to further improve safety for people walking and biking.

The City of Madison saw a large increase in serious and fatal traffic crashes during the Pandemic, including increases in crashes involving people walking and biking. This is devastating for the victims' families and friends, and a call to action for our community. The City of Madison is committed to changing those statistics and we believe that the project we are proposing for funding through SMART grant – "Putting PeopleFirst through Innovation & Technology" – is a critical component of reaching our goal of Vision Zero.

PeopleFirst focuses on six intersections along Park Street, which is a key corridor linking the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the "Beltline" highway that connects our city to the Interstate. Three of those intersections are in one of Madison's most disadvantaged census tracts, which is also one of our most diverse communities. South Madison, a historic African American neighborhood, is known for its ethnic restaurants, grocery stores and other small businesses. South Madison and the UW-Madison are connected by two neighborhoods with a mix of single- and multi-family homes. Park Street is also the home to Madison College, major hospital facilities, a library, a fire station, a police station, a transit hub, numerous community-based organizations, and public low-income housing. All these factors make this corridor one filled with "vulnerable road users" (VRUs) – i.e., people walking, biking, and taking transit beside and across a major motor vehicle traffic corridor. It also makes it one of our corridors with frequent crashes involving VRUs.

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Park Street is also home to significant new projects led by members of Madison's Black and Hispanic communities. These investments, supported by the city, will bring new customers and residents to the area, exacerbating the need to improve safety for vulnerable users. The time is now to make sure we understand the problems and potential solutions, so that we can implement them as part of South Madison's Renaissance.

The City of Madison, in partnership with UW-Madison, Madison College, and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, is committed to successfully carrying out PeopleFirst. We have a long history of working collaboratively with USDOT on projects. Along with our private partners, our staff have the experience, knowledge, and capabilities to execute this project and test these technological solutions. Ensuring our streets are safe is imperative and this project focused on detection, prediction of dangerousness and communication of warnings is an important step on our path to meeting our Vision Zero commitment. PeopleFirst leverages existing local and State investments in Smart City technologies on Park Street and synergizes with funding Madison is pursuing for the Bus Rapid Transit project along the corridor. The introduction of Bus Rapid Transit will improve economic vitality, public health, and connection to opportunities across the Madison Area for South Madison neighborhoods; it will also introduce more vulnerable road users to the corridor, further necessitating the need for PeopleFirst.

We believe that the unique blend of life-saving technologies that make up the PeopleFirst project can be a model not just for the City of Madison but also for all other communities across the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SRConway', written in a cursive style.

Satya Rhodes-Conway
Mayor
City of Madison